/42/

634 In order to have his orders carried out, the great chief had
701 at his command all the arms-bearing men in his administrative district, but he was not permitted to abuse his power of command in such a way as to prevent his subjects from earning their livelihood.

622 As has been mentioned, the great chief appointed the
634 village chiefs (šǎu pǎ) in the villages under his jurisdiction. Like him, they were appointed for life unless they committed a grave offense. In such cases, the arms-bearing men of the
[692] village brought their complaints against their village chief to
[687] the great chief. The latter investigated the case and appointed another village chief if he felt that there was sufficient justification.

[692] The village chief was, first of all, the judge in all minor
[651] matters. Moreover, he had to collect the taxes for the great chief and see to it that the great chief's orders were carried out. Parallel to the authority of the great chief, the village
[701] chief had at his disposal the arms-bearing men in his village, to whom he gave corresponding orders. Naturally, therefore, the same limitations applied to him as to the great chief.

622 The great chief had four or five officials at his disposal;
624 the village chief had one official. The orders were first of all
634 conveyed to them, and they were called upon for any task that their superior assigned to them. They were paid either by the great chief or by the village chief, depending on who their superior was, from his own pocket. There were no other officials in the true sense of the word.

622 The village chief's income consisted of his share of the
634 aforementioned fines meted out by the great chief, also the
681 fines that the village chief himself imposed in minor cases, and the minor services that the men and women of his village performed voluntarily.

c) Popular Assembly

●623 The popular assembly has special importance among the
634 Meau. There are two kinds of popular assemblies.

/42 cont./

623 The assembly of all the arms-bearing men of a village /43/ is usually convoked by the village chief in all cases pertaining to the welfare of the village. Such cases are: the laying out of rice fields, the selection of a settlement site in the relocation of villages, communal hunts, and the like. The [666] [634] majority vote decides the issue. The popular assembly, however, may be convoked even against the will of the village chief if the villagers want to file a complaint against their village chief with the great chief. In this case the assembly convenes upon the initiative of the village elders.

634 The popular assembly of all arms-bearing men within the administrative district of a great chief had far greater power. It met only when needed; its decisions had to be unamimous. It was convoked by the great chief in order to pass resolutions about important matters. Such important [721] [796] matters were decisions about war and peace and measures to be taken to celebrate the festival of the New Year or the harvest festival. The resolutions passed by the popular assembly of the great chief were of an advisory nature, for the great chief was under no obligation to comply with them. Actually, of course, he avoided acting against the voice of his people. In one case, however, the great chief was absolutely bound to accept the decision of the popular assembly: when the latter [692] had decided on his removal. The great popular assembly was, at the same time, a court of appeal for verdicts of the great chief, and its decisions were regarded as irrevocable.

634 693 The expenses of a popular assembly had to be paid by the person who summoned it, hence either by the great chief himself or the party who had moved that it be convened. Among the expenses there were the provisions for all the assembly-participants at the place of the meeting, but no compensation was given for the journey to and fro. Moreover, in connection with minor cases, two chickens and plenty of alcohol were collected for the great chief and the elders; in connection with major affairs, one or more pigs.

39: Bernatzik--355 E-5 (1936-1937) 1947 AO1 Thailand
AKha A04
Miao AE5

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/259/ Chapter 13

Settlement and House Construction

A M 166 361 The Meau as well as the Akha of Thailand are seminomads who change their residence sites every couple of years. They decide on such a move, however, by no means lightheartedly or out of nomadic impulses, as Credner (1) intimates, but rather

1. IV, p. 70.

compelling circumstances induce them to undertake the indescribable labor of moving a village. The main reason for it is A M [241] [242] the exhaustion of the cultivable soil as a result of cultivating clearings without fertilization. Depending on the fertility of the soil, it yields rice, the principal food of the population in northern Thailand, for two to four years. After four to ten years, all the cultivable land in the vicinity of a village is exhausted, and the people must contemplate a move if they do not want to starve. Other important reasons are warlike events and legal A M [648] insecurity, especially in China, or the imposition of taxes that are too high, as in Burma or Indochina (see the chapter, "Cultural Change and Colonial-Ethnological Problems among the Mountain Peoples in Thailand," the section, "Attitude of the Various Colonizers").

M 166 361 [731] [756] [623] [622] The Meau also move their villages if epidemics have broken out or if the shaman predicts a misfortune for the village. Among the Meau the decision to move the village is made by the assembly of all the men of the village capable of bearing arms (see the chapter, "Political Organization," the section, "Popular Assembly). In the assembly, the opinion of the chief, as well as that of the shaman, carries great weight. The wish of the two is decisive, not theoretically, but in practice.